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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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LIBERTY IN THE CHURCHES.

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”—1 Cor. xii. 31.

What were the gifts which they were to covet? What was that which was better than even those gifts? We are left in no doubt whatsoever. By turning back to the fore part of this chapter, it will be found that what may be called the whole ecclesiastical framework of the Christian church—its ordinances, its creeds, its officers, its polity, its methods—were undoubtedly included under this general term, *gifts*; and not only are they spoken of with respect, but there is the implication of a relative and graded excellence in them; and men are commanded to desire the best of them; yet there is something that is better than all of them. What is that? It is the contents of the 13th of First Corinthians which I read and comment on so often in this church that I am afraid you will think I do not read any other part of the Bible much.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

I shall not read it. I merely announce what it is. It is the living force of Christianity.

Paul says, “Covet earnestly the best gifts;” but there is something better than they are, and that is the living power of God in the human soul. That, I take it, would be Paul’s interpretation of this passage, if he were here, and should interpret it in the light of the present state of facts and of feeling in the Christian church.

By looking back you will see, in the fourth verse of the 12th chapter, this declaration :

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of administration [governments, and so on], but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations [the phenomena attending the whole work of God in the human soul is infinitely various], but it is the same God which worketh all in all [all these things in all men]. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal. [There is no inherent sanctity in these things; they are not worth anything in themselves. Their end and object is the profit which they work out in men. Their value is to be graded and decided by the profit which is in them. If they do no good, then they are not good ; and if they do a great deal of good, then they are good. They are to be measured by the profit which they are capable of bestowing.] For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom [that is, the instruction of the real old logician, preaching truth according to high philosophical forms, *wisdom* signifying philosophy, substantially]."

Now, you have no right to ridicule those old dry doctrinaires—the men who preach solid doctrine. There is a place and a use for them. You may say that they look like great knots, and hard, twisted roots of forest trees. Well, very likely they do ; but I notice that the veneers for the most beautiful furniture are sawed out of these very knots, and twisted roots, and what not. Therefore they serve a purpose.

"To another the word of knowledge [experience, practical life, things ethical], by the same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy [not merely foretelling, but teaching]; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

The unity of the Church is in Jesus Christ, and not in sects, nor in any feeble earthly churches. They are all members or parts. The unity is in Christ, in the Spirit. Some of these churches and sects are eyes ; some of them are ears ; some of them are hands ; some of them are feet ; some of them are nails, apparently, and they scratch. They have different functions.

"For [and this is a most radical and revolutionary passage, when you consider that it was spoken in the eyes and face of the Jews—a

bigoted and angry nation who would not listen—and that it was considered to be almost as much as a man's life was worth to say to them that a Gentile had any considerable rights] by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one spirit."

The essential unity of all men who are endeavoring to develop in themselves the life of Christ is here declared.

Now, having asserted the reality of all these externalities, these gifts, these instruments, the apostle says, "Seek the best of them." You may have a preference; you may take the best; "And yet," he says, "there is something which is better than they are; which ranks higher than they do; which has dominion over them." What is that? The essential free spirit of a living soul—the life of God made manifest by love in men. That is superior to all these other things.

The doctrine, then, is this: that the mood to which love brings men is freer, is safer, is better than the external forms of the Church.

I think these Pauline chapters are not studied half enough in our day, when so many events are taking place which cannot be rightly judged of except by the free, lofty principles that are laid down by that apostle.

First, there is ample recognition in the New Testament of the need and wisdom of church institutions. It is true that our Master did not command his disciples to form a church. It is true that there is not on record one single line or word from him which prescribes a new church as distinct from the Jewish church. He lived in the Jewish church himself. He died a member and communicant of that church. Nor did his disciples understand that they were to step out of it and fashion another one. They, all of them, for more than twenty-five years, lived in communion with the Jewish Church. Forty years after the ascension of their Master they still sacrificed in the temple, and were a Christian brotherhood only as a party in the original Jewish Church. It would seem to be the height of historical phantasy, therefore, to declare that the Christian Church was outlined and prescribed by the Lord Jesus Christ, understood to be so by his apostles, and taught by them to be so. A greater mistake can scarcely be imagined.

Nevertheless, there was a church. There were religious institutions. They were accepted. They were implied. And the moment the apostles began to preach outside of Judæa where there was no temple, and where there were no synagogues, they were organized, they were officered, and there came to be laws and methods and usages; and the apostles commanded them, interpreted them, and ranked them.

Therefore, if any man say that there is no warrant in the word of God for any church organization, I think he misses the mark on one extreme, as much as the hierarch misses it on the other when he declares that there was a specific form of organization prescribed for the Christian Church. These are the extremists on the one side and on the other.

Secondly, it is recognized that there is perfect freedom in taking up and laying down the ordinances, the usages, the laws, the customs, and the instructing methods of the New Testament. You can make your election among them. You can avail yourselves of them, not according to any prescribed divinely appointed scheme, but according to the exigencies and necessities of the work which you yourselves have in hand; for the liberty of man, by virtue of his adhesion to the Lord Jesus Christ, is the axis of the teaching of the New Testament. We are individually free on account of our being joined to Christ. So we have liberty of judgment, liberty of interpretation, and liberty of action, within the sphere of Christ-likeness or of the Christ-spirit; and no man has a right to judge another in regard to his usages, his ordinances, his forms of church organization, and his methods of instruction. To his own master he stands or falls. There are methods, there is ecclesiastical organization, there are doctrines and ceremonies, there is polity, and there are governments; these are recognized in the New Testament; and the teachers and members of Christ's body are declared to be at liberty to select among them, taking those which are best adapted to themselves, to the exigencies of their age, and to the service which a special providence may demand from them.

The personal freedom of man sacrificed to ordinances

or to churches—that is one extreme; an intense individualism which refuses all laws, all ordinances, and all polity, under the name of personal liberty, is another extreme; and the history of religion has been a history of vibration between these two extremes. One age, or one clan, has insisted upon it that men should all be gathered into one church, under regular officers who should prescribe for them their thoughts, their feelings, their ethical duties, almost fixing the hour and the minute, so that all individualism should be sucked up into organization; and men were considered as good for little else than to make churches. They lost their individual power.

Then came a brief reaction from that. Men threw off all the restrictions which had been laid upon them by laws and regulations, and rebounded to the other extreme, and asserted and cultivated their personal rights and liberties, and were jealous of ministers and usages and ordinances, and said, “I am a free man in Christ Jesus, and I shall speak as I choose, and do as I like: no man shall lay any authority on me.”

This spirit of individualism, logically carried out, is one which makes it impossible for Christians to work together.

Now, both of these principles are right, and both of them are in endless operation in society. First there is that spirit which tends to produce individual liberty and independency of thought and feeling. That spirit makes sturdy men; but men who cannot work together peaceably and efficiently. There is nothing in them which leads them to give up their own rights for the sake of promoting the cause which they are endeavoring to serve. Excessive individuality breaks men up into minims, so that they are like isolated particles of sand, and are but little better than those particles, compared to the aggregated power of the great body of the church. And then there is that spirit which would take away all individual liberty and independency of thought and feeling—and that kills the individual.

So there is to be a medium. Both elements are to be continually studied. There is to be the power of the church as a whole, and there is to be the power of individuals as separate members. The power of the whole church, like

that of the State, is made greater by the strength of each individual. The government must be strong enough for the common welfare ; but if it be too strong, it is apt to beat down the citizens ; and when the citizens are weakened, their weakness reflects itself upon the government. There must be a coöperation of these opposite elements so that they shall work together. There is to be a large liberty given to the power of the individual, for the sake of giving to the whole commonwealth liberty and power. And as it is in the State, so is it in the church.

Hence, the right of men to associate themselves together for the sake of teaching certain doctrinal systems is not to be gainsaid. There has been a spirit of doctrinal despotism established, largely ; though men ridicule creeds and dogmas to-day. If I have seemed to have a share in this untoward spirit in my speaking, it has been from the over-action of intensity rather than from any deliberate purpose ; because I recognize the fact that no man thinks to any purpose who does not think dogmatically. Any man who thinks consecutively must think systematically ; and systematic thinking leads to the formation of systems ; and truths stated positively in the form of a system are always dogmatic. Nevertheless, when dogmas become imperious ; when men's personal liberty is interfered with by the imposition upon them of creeds, then creeds become oppressive and are wrong—wrong not in and of themselves, necessarily, but in their use.

Now, I advocate the right of men to associate together for the purpose of making known any line of thought, whether it be in the department of science or in any part or sphere of human knowledge. Men have a right to associate together for the purpose of promoting right notions of art, of architecture, of medicine, of mechanics, of civil government, of church polity, or of religious doctrines. It is one of the great rights springing out of the individual liberty of a man, that he may call to himself as many as are in agreement with him, in order that they, by common counsel and effort, may make known and enforce, as far as they can, any particular line of thought or practice. I maintain the right of men to Arminianism, if they believe in Arminianism ;

to Pelagianism, if they believe in Pelagianism; to semi-Pelagianism, if they believe in semi-Pelagianism; and to demi-semi-Pelagianism, if they believe in demi-semi-Pelagianism. I declare the freest liberty of a man, being responsible to his God and not to men or magistrates, to the right of association, with the object of promoting any view of Calvinism, whether it be high-church, low-church, middle-church, broad-church, or no-church. The liberty of association is universal, and is not to be disputed, but is to be guaranteed as one of the inevitable results of the higher doctrine of the liberty of the individual.

For purposes of enforcing ordinances men also have a right to association. There is nothing in the genius of Christianity, there certainly is nothing in its precepts, which forbids men to separate themselves into bodies, or to make others understand the advantages of particular ordinances.

Now, so long as Mr. Faraday's name lives, we shall speak with great respect of the Sandemanians, who taught the practice of washing the feet of disciples. They felt that there was in that ordinance a great truth. I think that there was a great truth in it. I do not see why the washing of the disciples' feet did not carry with it a truth as sublime as that of the Lord's Supper, which was a part of that ordinance, and which was not separated from it by any line of demarkation. The Sandemanians held it to be an ordinance of perpetual validity in the church. I do not believe any ordinance to be authoritative.

When I form a sect (and that will be in a future state of existence), it will be a sect that uses all ordinances that it wants to, and that does not use any ordinance that it does not want to. It will be a sect that exercises liberty in the matter of ordinances. I think that ordinances are like a black-board in a school. It is good to put things on, but you do not want to put one thing on it every time. It is a thing to demonstrate by.

I do not think that infant baptism is insisted upon in the New Testament. I do not see a vestige of it there. At any rate, the nearest approach to it is a far-fetched inference. And yet, I practice infant baptism. Why do I do it? Be-

cause I think it very beautiful and helpful. "Hem!" you say, "is that the only foundation you have for it?" That is foundation enough. "To profit withal," says the apostle, meaning that these gifts of the spirit are to be profitable; and when any ordinance shows that it is profitable, that is all the warrant that you want for it. That it does good, is reason enough for any thing. But you claim to practice it because Christ taught it. Where did he teach it?

Now, men may associate together for ordinances provided they will not quarrel; provided they will not use their liberty to break down other men; provided they will work in the spirit of Christ.

We find that the various churches have their different ordinances, and that they are characterized by them. We find that the Baptist churches are set apart from our Congregational churches by nothing greater than a peculiar mode of baptizing. Now, excuse me; for I love those brethren, and I honor their sturdy independence; and yet, the older I grow the more I feel amazed that a great body of intelligent, educated Christian men should make the spirit of the church in Christ Jesus to turn, not only on an external action, but even on a mode of performing that external action; and that they do not perceive that the essential element of Christianity is not represented by such minute particularities as that.

Some of them believe in keeping the seventh day of the week instead of the first; and so we have the "Seventh-day Baptists." Others have their own notion respecting man's free will. The principle of free will not having found any lodgment in the old Baptist denomination, a new one has been formed to show that there is such a will.

So three sects have grown out of one; and I assert the liberty of every one of them to organize and to make known their doctrines by organization, and to bring as many to their way of thinking as they can. And this liberty of theirs is not to be derided, certainly it is not to be over slaughtered, though you may not agree with them.

But when any band of Christians, having associated themselves together for ordinances, say, not, "My conscience de-

mands this," but, "Your conscience shall demand it, or I will punish you," then I am up in arms, and I say, "Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? Am I your servant? I am Jesus Christ's servant. To my own Master I stand or fall. Who art thou that judgest me, another man's servant?" You may argue with a man in kindness and in love, but you have not a right even to argue with him until you tire him out. You have not a right to put him to any inconvenience, or to place any pain or penalty upon him, because he differs from you.

Men say that the time of persecution is past; but I do not think it is. The forms of persecution are changed; men are not subjected to physical violence for not believing in this, that or the other thing; but they are punished in other ways.

They are punished morally; and I declare that moral penalties in a community are more severe than physical ones. You can punish a man by thought-power and by emotional power as you cannot by thongs or by the sword. And I say that it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity for any man to be incommoded because he does not hold to ordinances. You have a right to hold them, and to promulgate them; but you have no right to make them despotic, and compel men to conform to them, and chastise them for not taking them.

We have a right to associate for the sake of certain forms of worship. If men feel that a gradually accumulated liturgy, through the ages, has power to excite their imagination, their emotion, their reverence, their wisdom and their love, who shall say to them, "You shall not have it"? Who shall interfere with their liberty? I hold it to be not alone the liberty of the individual, but the liberty also of the sect.

I hear brethren in sister churches reviled because they have introduced the responsive reading of the Psalms. They have a right to it if they like it. More than that, they have a right to precomposed forms of prayer if they like them. They have not thereby vacated their claims to Congregationalism.

Episcopacy does not mean forms of worship: it means radical ideas of government. The forms of worship are ac-

cidental or incidental. That which is radical lies in the essential administrative element. I defend for sister churches their right to organize their worship in the way in which they can administer it most to the edification of their people ; and I defend the right of their people to go with them in such organization.

On the other hand, I defend the right of good and Christian men to go to church without a book, without a liturgy, without a minister, without a sermon, and to sit for two mortal hours still as flowers at midnight. It is their right. It is not their right to make me sit there ; but it is their right to organize and to maintain such worship as profits them. And without a doubt they have a right to propagate it, if they can, by fair reasoning ; but they have not a right to point to it and say, " This represents universal Christianity." I say that all these forms of worship are " diversities of gifts " —parts of one body which is larger, incalculably, than any of them ; and that one of them is a hand, that another is a foot, that another is an eye, and that another is an ear. The liberty I advocate : the despotism I denounce.

That which is true in regard to ordinances or methods of worship is just as true in regard to government. What a pothor the world has had as to who should govern. Generally, the man who can, does it ; and then comes the reason for it. The causes are, " I am strong and you are weak," and the reasons are sometimes, " God ordained me to reign," and sometimes, " The people appointed me to be their ruler." The cause of government lies in the sense of power in the governor, and in his conscious capacity to make men mind.

Now, I advocate the right of bodies of men to govern themselves ; and if a large and respectable body of intelligent men say, " We prefer to be governed by priests, and to have them governed by bishops, and to have them governed by archbishops, and to have them governed by cardinals, and to have the whole of them governed by a pope, an elder brother, or a father ;" and if they say, " We like this, and we claim it as our right," they have a perfect right to it, and I have not a word to say against it. You may have your priests, your bishops, your archbishops, your cardinals, your pope, and

your canon-law ; but you shall not turn round and say, "This is Christianity, and unless you take it you shall be damned." I won't be damned ; and I won't take it, either ! I affirm their right to do that which they think best ; and I affirm their right to think that that is the pattern of the New Testament ; but I deny their right to impose it upon others. I affirm the right of a man to say to me, "Why don't you eat vinegar?" and I affirm his right to say to me, "Sit down and let me show you why you ought to eat it;" but if he puts vinegar on my plate, and insists upon my eating it, that I object to.

I do not object to Episcopacy. I honor the Episcopal Church. I revere multitudes of its members. Modern Christianity owes an unpayable debt to the heroic scholars and ministers of that church who lived in the past—a great and noble band ; but if they come to me, and say, "We are Christ's body on earth, and you owe to us the allegiance which is due to Christ," I scoff at them, and say, "I do not owe my allegiance to Jesus through that round-about and humanly invented system." My allegiance goes straighter than an arrow to its mark. It is a matter between me and Jesus Christ. There stands my liberty, in the plenary power of my own manhood. Therefore I defend their autonomy, and their liberty in it ; and I defend against them our liberty, and say that they have no right to incommode us for not taking that which they want, because we see differently from them, and do not want it.

If these views are correct, then there are some sequences, some questions and answers, that arise out of them, and that are of practical import in our time.

First, I hold that no man has a right to enter into any Christian church or communion for the sake of changing the economy, the doctrines and the usages of that church. It is bad faith to do it. No man has a right to come into this church for the sake of turning it into a Presbyterian church. That would be underhanded. If a man stands over the other side, not coming in here as a member and, without disguise, openly says, "I am going to spread Presbyterianism, if I can, through your church," that I consider

to be right. On that ground there is ample liberty. A man has a right to talk with you in the street, or to go with you to your house and reason with you decorously and properly, and, if he can, turn you into a Presbyterian; but no man has a right to come in here as a Congregationalist with this feeling: "I like Presbyterianism better than I do Congregationalism; and I am going to work, little by little, using the organic power of this church, to undermine it and change it." That would not be manly. It would be dishonorable. It would not be fair-play. No man has a right to go into a Congregational church to Presbyterize it; or into a Baptist church to blow up its Baptisteries; or into a Presbyterian church to break down its Session, and bring in the brotherhood form of government. That would not be acting fairly, nor in a manly and honorable way.

Secondly, no man has a right to employ a sectarian organization for any other purpose than the promotion of spiritual ends. I have defended the right of church organization and equipment, but I declare that under their allegiance to God all church organizations are responsible for the use of their every opportunity to the great end that is prescribed in the New Testament, namely, "profit withal;" and the "profit withal" is in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, where a higher and better way is developed by divine love in the hearts and dispositions of mankind. All churches, while they are not responsible to each other, and while they cannot be responsible to any public sentiment, are responsible to God for the use of their whole equipment and organization in promoting, not a narrow, jealous, combative, pugnacious, irritable spirit among men, but a spirit which shall liberalize men, and bring them nearer to each other, and make them feel more the ties of common brotherhood, instead of setting a man against his neighbor. There is an obligation resting on the Christian church which has not been enough brought to bear upon the consciences of good and faithful men—the obligation of using all the external forms of Christian institutions to promote the great end of Christianity, which is the development of the Spirit of God in the souls of men.

Thirdly, no man has a right to impugn the motives of

those who choose excessive organizations. That is to say, if a man is very rigorous for church government, high or low, no one has a right to impugn his motives, or to refuse him the liberty of teaching his views.

Out of these facts have grown many questions, in every age; and they exist plentifully, and are likely to exist much more largely, in our own day.

May a man enter or leave a church when he dissents from the doctrines which are held, and which he knows to be held by that church? May a man, for example, go into an orthodox church knowing that he does not hold to the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment? May a man go into an orthodox church when he knows he does not hold to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as it is held by the high Calvinistic preachers? I affirm that no man has the right to go into any church for the sake of making trouble; for the sake of consciously selfish ends; but if for special reasons a man feels that any particular church is more sure than another to help him, and to promote in him humility, meekness, gentleness, lovingness and loveliness, he has a right to go into it. A man has a right to go into any Christian church on the ground of "profit withal." *Need* is a sufficient reason for a man's going into any Christian church.

Well, should he go without making known his dissent?

If the church chooses to inquire with regard to his belief, and scrutinizes it, he is bound to state it, but not otherwise. The enabling you to live a better Christian life is ample reason for you to go into a church; and if the church does not choose to defend itself from persons holding doctrines different from its own, it is not your business to make known your peculiar views. All you have to do is to go there sincerely and earnestly for the purpose of living a godly life, knowing that you will hear articles of creed promulgated which you do not agree with, and compromising with yourself, and saying, "I will listen to these things which I do not believe for the sake of the general beneficial influences which I shall derive." You have a right to take that stand; and there is no unfairness in it.

One of the admirable things about the high Episcopal churches is that a man may go into them and commune, and not be disturbed by having his doctrines inquired into. The views of the ministry are examined and taken care of, but the members are received on the ground that they are attempting to live a Christian life; and the liberty which these churches accord in this respect is truly Christian. The liberty which is given to the membership in the Roman Church, and the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church in its higher forms, where persons are accepted, not on the ground of adherence to particular beliefs, but on the ground that they come to be instructed, and are willing to receive instruction, is true Christian liberty. The position which they take in that particular is one which might well prevail throughout all our churches.

Churches are good for nothing in and of themselves, any more than any other organizations; but men have come to worship churches. If they do not think them to be gods, they regard them as in such a sense sacred that they really have a feeling of idolatry toward them. Therefore, when a man thinks of going into the church a feeling of awe comes over him.

Now, what is a church? It is an instructing body which undertakes to help men toward heaven; and it has sanctity in it just as far as it has the power of producing results in that direction.

A church that has the power of producing nothing is like a garden that is a sand-heap. Calling a sand-heap a garden does not make it one; and calling a useless body of a hundred or five hundred men a church does not make them worth anything. If a church is of any value, it is because of the amount of power which it exerts.

What is the test of fire-engines? An old rattletrap that is a hundred years old, and that cannot squirt water twenty feet high, is not worthy to be called a fire-engine. The machine that will throw the biggest stream, and throw it the longest, is the best machine, is the one that is to be most admired, and is the most worthy of having men take off their hats to it when they go past it; but an engine that cannot

put out a fire, or do anything else, is not worth your taking off your hat. It is good for nothing. It is worse than that, because it makes an appearance as though it were good for something. And I say that a church which has no power, which is dead, which is dry, and which has the habit of desiccating those that come into it; a church which is like the old Jewish tombs that were cut out of a rock, with shelves, into each of which a man was shoved, there to lie until the judgment came; a church which is merely furnished with cushioned seats in which men are to sit and be respectable and stupid at the proper hours on Sunday morning—I say that such a church is unworthy of veneration. It is only the love of God among men that has a claim to our reverence. The real thing in religion is the existence and exertion of moral power in the living soul. Not the outward enginery that the soul employs, but the spirit itself—the spirit of God, or the spirit of man awakened by God's spirit—that is the real thing. Where it exists under the mitre, it is venerable; and where it exists under the matron's cap it is just as venerable. It takes its value, not from external instruments and circumstances, but from the fact that it springs from God, and has in it something of the glory and grandeur of divine nature.

We are now regaled with the fidelities and infidelities of the High, the Low, the Broad, and the Evangelical divisions of the Church of England. I read their papers with some diligence, and I perceive that “a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.” I see that the High churchman dislikes the Low churchman worse than he does men who are no churchmen at all; and I perceive that the Low churchman dislikes the High churchman immensely—that he likes the Presbyterian a great deal better. I can see that Evangelicals are very bitter against those that are heterodox, and that those that are heterodox are very bitter against the Evangelicals, for the sake of exhibiting their zeal for love!

Now, the question that is asked, is, “Why do men stay where principles are held with which they are not in accord?” Each party says, “We are the church, and these men who dissent from our doctrines should go out. We represent true

churchism ; and why do those who do not want it stay here to vex us ? Why do they not leave the church ?”

I hold that they have a right to stay in it. I plead the liberty of a man to remain in the church of his fathers. I assert the right of a man to stay there as a teacher, so that he does not transcend the fundamental organization which he has sworn to support. I claim for him the right to a wide liberty of conscience in interpreting his own duty, and a wide liberty of judgment in the use which he shall make of the ritual and the ceremonies of the church. I aver that those who are High, if they are doing good, are not to be molested by those who are Low ; and that those who are Low, if they are doing good, are not to be molested by those who are High. It is contrary to the essential spirit of Christianity for men in the same sect to persecute each other on grounds where persons may rightfully have a broad margin of difference.

I am sorry to see these things in the Episcopal Church. It was the church of my mother ; and if there were no other reasons that would be reason enough why, as long as I live, I should pray for its peace.

The fact, that in every large body of men there are two inherent elements, ought never to be forgotten. We do not enough take into account that there are certain great principles of human nature which are shaping the doctrines and policies of Christianity in any given age. We are apt to forget that there are fundamental influences at work, and that men are continually hindering or fighting against each other. For you may depend upon it that in every large body of men there are two sorts, one of which represents the element of personal liberty or democracy, and the other of which represents the element of aristocracy or monarchy. Society breaks up into these two divisions naturally, the object of their separation being that both may have some form of enginery.

For instance, in Europe the civil and political institutions for the most part represent the aristocratic and monarchic element ; and through them the want of mankind for this element is satisfied. The churches of Europe, for the most

part, represent the democratic element. All classes stand nearer together in church fellowship in Europe than they do here. For in America political institutions represent democracy. The want of the democratic element is satisfied in the framework of our government. Our churches undertake to satisfy the other element—that of aristocracy. The churches in America are more aristocratic than the churches in Europe, and they tend to be, from the fact that here the democratic element is supplied in our political institutions, and that the aristocratic element there is supplied by their political institutions. There is everywhere a want of the democratic element, and a want of the aristocratic element; and in this country one finds itself relieved through our political institutions, while the other finds itself relieved through our church institutions.

In a community of two or three thousand people a church is built that will hold perhaps five hundred people; and that will be all that will want to go to it; because, in the main, churches fall into the habit of taking in those that are the most respectable—people that are at the top of society. The poor and needy, by and large, do not go to church. They do not feel that it is their home.

Take the average churches in New York and Brooklyn, from Murray Hill downward, and I think it will be found that the aristocratic and prosperous elements have possession of them, and that if the great under-class, the poor and needy, go to them at all, they go sparsely, and not as to a home. Men of all classes do not stand in our churches upon so nearly a level, on so democratic a footing, as they do in Europe. Our churches are largely for the mutual insurance of prosperous families, and not for the upbuilding of the great under-class of humanity.

I have illustrated this at large in order to bring it to bear especially upon the great conflicts which are going on in the Episcopal Church. There are men who by nature and culture tend toward the aristocratic element; and we see that made a prominent element in their church history and in their church books. They adhere to it from elective affinity; their nature inclines toward it; and they conscientiously say,

“This is the genius of the church, and the church is to be administered accordingly.”

Then there is another body which as sincerely represents the democratic element. They are in the same church. They were born there, or they came there at an early period; they feel at home there; and that is their house as much as it is the house of the others; and they say, “This church is to be administered liberally, democratically.” These two elements stand and charge each other with insincerity. The Low churchman says, “You are going off to Rome;” and the High churchman says, “You are going off to Independency;” and each of them is attempting to administer the same household in accordance with his own great psychological tendencies.

It is said often (I see it in the newspapers, and I read it with great respect—for when newspapers undertake to teach Christianity I always feel disposed to listen), “If a man does not run with the ruling spirits of his church, what is the use of his staying in it? If he wants something more Congregational, why does he not go into a Congregational church?” Now, this has good sound; but it is miserable chaff. Do you suppose that a man who is in the church is there just as a man is in a hotel? I go over and stop at some crowded downtown hotel, and am put into a seventh-story room, in August; and I sleep—no, I stay—there one night. The next morning I go down and pay my bill, and say, “I am going to the Fifth Avenue Hotel.” But I have not abandoned my colors. I was not well accommodated where I was. I was not comfortable and happy there. I had no root of association there. But suppose a man was in the homestead where he was born and brought up, and where he hoped to live all the days of his life, and suppose it should be said to him, “There are differences in your family; why don’t you clear out and leave the old house altogether?” What! leave the graves of my father and mother? Leave the playground of my boyhood? Leave the scenes about which are twined recollections of everything that is most sacred to me? Am I to tear up the most precious associations of my life, and do violence to all that is dear in my memory, and transplant myself to a strange soil?

When a man is born in a church, it is not simply like going into a hotel; it is like the planting of a tree in a garden, where its roots strike deep, and where its branches spread wide; and it is no small thing for him to go out of that church and seek religious associations elsewhere. You cannot transplant an oak that is a hundred years old and have it live and thrive. I believe that young people can sometimes safely change their faith; but I do not believe that old people ever can. Changing one's faith is so hazardous that I would not advise persons of one faith to abandon it for another. I would never try to convert a veteran Roman Catholic from his faith to the Protestant belief. My effort would be, rather, to make him a better Christian where he was. I would not do anything to lead him to change his church associations.

If a man says, "My father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters were baptized by immersion, and I should prefer to be baptized in that way, but I am willing to be baptized by sprinkling; I say "Don't; be baptized by the mode which will be most in accordance with your feelings. Baptism is nothing, in and of itself, whether it be immersion or sprinkling; but if you have been all your life in association with ideas which lead you to prefer to be immersed, then be immersed."

And if it is argued, "Why does not this man or that man go out of the Episcopal Church?" my answer is, that a man cannot transplant himself from one church to another with perfect ease. And it is a burning shame to any church, or bishop, or bishopric, when a truly holy and godly man is willing to seek the welfare of those who are under his charge, if that church or bishop or bishopric is not tolerant enough to let him work on, although there are special and minute differences between his belief and theirs. It is a disgrace where in a church there is so arrogant, so hard, so cold, so unelastic a spirit that a true man cannot breathe unless he goes out of it. It is a slander on Christianity. And I say to men in the Episcopal church, who work toward the lower side, stand where you are. Do not be cast out of your father's house. You have a right to the heritage of all the

honored names which belong to the history of that church, and to all its sacraments and revered associations, which are as sweet to you as they are to your mitred bishop. You have a right to preach baptism; and you have a right to say "Baptism" instead of "Regeneration." Stand for your liberties, for your God, and for the spirit of Christianity which is at stake in the conduct of the church!

If there is a principle on one side which should send a man out, there is a squadron of principles on the other side which should make a man stay in, under such circumstances.

The same question may be argued on doctrinal grounds. Just at the present time the trial of Prof. David Swing, at Chicago, by the Presbyterian church, is exciting great interest; and though I detest puns, yet I will say that when this trial is over, his name should be changed to David Sling. May he take other smooth stones from the brook Kidron, and smite another Goliath—the Goliath of religious despotism—between the eyes, and overthrow him, and leave him lying dead upon the ground.

It is said, "He does not believe in the doctrines of that church." I honor him if he does not. I can conceive that a man, in this age, with a sweet and tender heart and disposition, may believe in the Presbyterian confession of faith; I know it is possible, because I was once in that church, and I am acquainted with the experience of others who have been in it; but I do not think that one in ten of the men who go into the Presbyterian church ever propounds to himself the fullness of the doctrinal statements which are contained in that confession of faith, or believes them, as they were originally understood by the men who framed them.

This trial of Prof. Swing takes me back to the time when I began my ministry, in 1834; when I went from Cincinnati, to study theology under my father, in Lane Seminary. Dr. Wilson, then settled over the church in which now preaches my nephew, whose ordination sermon I delivered, set the battle in array against Lyman Beecher. My father was tried for heresy in not believing in the doctrines of the confession of faith of the Presbyterian church in the United States; and I think that trial exhibited as

magnificent an instance as ever was on record, of the ingenuity of an honest man making it appear that he believed in things which he not only did not believe in, but revolted against, from the hair on top of his head to the soles of his feet!

Do you ask, "How do you explain it consistently with honesty?" I do it in this way: These statements are susceptible of what may be called a High interpretation, and a Low interpretation. From the earliest history of the Presbyterian Church, it was understood that in bringing together its conflicting elements there should be a certain elasticity of interpretation, so that men should not be molested in that church any more than they were in the Church of England, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, who shaped its policy in such a way as to bring the extreme and the moderate Protestants together, and give the one a chance to take a little pap from the old mother without being interfered with by the other.

The discordant elements of the Presbyterian Church being thus brought together, the framework of doctrine was not so rigorous but that men might accept it for substance, and yet not accept it in all its parts.

Now, when the Westminster confession of faith and catechism came over from England, and went through the minds of New England divines, such as Hopkins, and Bellamy, and the elder Jonathan Edwards, and the younger, and Dwight, and when the Calvinism of New England had undergone an essential modification, it was called Low Calvinism, as distinguished from that in England and Scotland, where perhaps men were more sturdy, and better able to deal with such terrible doctrines as those of the system of Calvinism. In the Presbyterian Church were men who held the New England view, and interpreted theology accordingly; and they constituted the New School. There were also, in that church, men who represented the Scotch and English element, which prevailed in the Middle and Western States; and they constituted the Old School.

These two Schools were pitted against each other; and it should be recognized that from the beginning there was an

agreement that the one should hold the lax and the other the rigorous view. But in connection with slavery these differences split the church asunder, the Old School going by itself, and the New School by itself. After the war, however, the two sections came together again ; and I hoped that the understanding that on the one side the Low Calvinistic party should hold the Low Calvinistic doctrine, and that on the other side the High Calvinistic party should hold the High Calvinistic doctrine, would continue, and that each would be judged by the good that it did ; but, no ; almost in the early years of that understanding Prof. Swing is called before the Presbytery of Chicago for taking the ground assumed by the New School.

Professor Patton is an honorable man, no doubt ; but he is a man who believes in machine theology ; who insists on doctrine of just such a kind ; who wants the crank to turn just so, and grind out regularly creeds and dogmas of just such a pattern. He thinks he is doing his duty. His conscience is up. He feels bound to bring these matters to the test. I hope Professor Swing will be acquitted.

But the point of special interest to me is this : Great efforts are being made to bring together the Presbyterian churches of every name—the Old and New Schools, the Dutch Reformed, the Associate Reformed, and other smaller bodies, South as well as North : but are the various elements of this vast Presbyterian system coming together on the ground that there is to be no elasticity of belief ; that there is to be no liberty of instruction ; that the men who hold the hardest doctrines in the hardest way are to be permitted to take the knout and flog everybody who holds other doctrines in other ways ? We are interested in the future career and usefulness of so august and noble a body as the Presbyterian Church of the United States. My love for her will never die. She was my foster-mother. Under the cope of that church I began my labor in the ministry. I never loved and never shall love brethren as I loved those men in the wilderness with whom I wrought in desolate places, going from log-cabin to log-cabin, preaching in the forest, and holding camp-meetings. They were men doing God's work

together ; and as good a body of men as ever had heart-beats under human ribs were they. The associations of that church are very dear to me ; I love it ; I honor it ; I never shall forget its usefulness ; and it is a matter of moment to me which spirit is going to pervade it—the spirit of monarchy, which is despotism ; or the spirit of Christ, which is liberty.

Therefore, I want you to join me not alone in sympathy, but in prayers that God would overrule these first efforts which are being made to persecute a man who exercises his right of thought and expression in that venerable church, for liberty of thinking, for liberty of teaching, and for liberty of administration.

Although I have talked longer than I ought to have done on this subject, I must add one single word to what I have said ; and it is this : Far be it from you, and far be it from me, to look upon these dissensions in the different churches with ill-concealed gladness. I am sorry for their divisions. I would do the things that make for peace, if peace could only be made with liberty of conscience and liberty of administration. I am sorry for their turbulence. I would not put a straw's impediment in their way.

I do not rejoice to see these conflicts in the Presbyterian Church. I never could go into that church again ; I do not believe that in some respects it maintains the spirit or the letter of Christianity ; nevertheless the great body of its teaching is good, and its effect in the community is, beyond all controversy, beneficial. It is an admirable and noble church, built when blows had to be struck thick and fast, in dangerous places, for the liberty of man's consciences, and for the liberty of the church itself. I honor this old church ; and having been so many years in her bosom I sympathize with everything that is for her prosperity, and regret everything that is against her welfare. I desire her peace ; and therefore I pray that her ministers may not be bound in thought, but may feel that they have a right to preach and administer "to profit withal ;" and that the spirit of her pulpit may be this : "How shall we present the truth of Christ Jesus so that selfishness shall be slain, so that pride shall be humbled, or that purity shall be estab-

lished, and so that men shall be lifted into the manhood and glory of the sons of God ?”

Blessed be every man, whether he be heretic or orthodox, who so preaches that men’s lives are amended, and that their dispositions are transformed ; and woe be to every man or church which preaches doctrines,—and loses mankind !

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

WE thank thee, our heavenly Father, that thou hast caused the sun to know his journey and his duty; and that there are now coming forth children of light in all the earth—flowers of beauty. We thank thee that thou art again lifting thy banners upon the trees, and filling the air with warmth; and that summer is drawing near with all its blessedness, its fruits, its sights of beauty, and its sounds. We thank thee that not alone without, but within also, come the spring and the summer; and that we hear the voice of birds, and behold the flowers that are born—not such as shall perish again, but flowers immortal—to grow here, and to be transplanted for better growing hereafter.

Will the Lord bless the dear children that have been brought in their helplessness hither; and grant that it may be unto them even as their parents desire in their best hours and in their best thoughts respecting them. May they teach them the industries of life. May they train them in habits which shall make them good and prosperous men. Grant that they may evermore feel that the life of their children is not in the things which pertain to this world, and that they are rearing them for immortality and for glory. May they have strength and wisdom given them to be patient and to be hopeful in spite of all difficulties, and to persevere unto the end. And grant that the lives of these thy servants may be a perpetual gospel to their children. May the children know the truth of Christ by beholding it in those who are rearing them. We pray that their life and health may be precious; that they may be spared to grow up into manhood, and take part and lot in the great works of life. Or, if thou wilt call them by a speedier way, and with not so long an exile from heaven upon earth, prepare thy servants to yield up to God these most precious gifts which they now take from his hand.

And we pray that all those who are bearing in their bosoms and upon their hearts heavily the care and the anxiety of their children may know how to cast these burdens upon the Lord. May they know how to bring their little children to Jesus, and rejoice to behold them sitting on his knee, and him blessing them, with his arms about them, and his hands upon their heads.

We pray, O God, that thou wilt comfort any to whom the sight of these children brings pain, reminding them of their own dear ones that have gone to be with thee, and quickening their sadness and their sorrow. May they still have that comfort which is in the gospel of Jesus Christ for their mourning hearts. May they know that there is divine compassion for every one that hath been called to bear affliction and drink the bitter cup. May they know that there is in the bosom of Christ that sympathy and consideration evermore for all who suffer.

Grant that all those who come up hither to-day from troubles and

*Immediately following the baptism*of children.

afflictions of various kinds may find in thy presence, in thy truth, in thy sympathy, and in the scenes, and prayers, and gladness of thine house, cheer and consolation; that they may rest from their labor, that they may be healed of their sorrow, and that they may, by faith, by hope, by forelooking and by upward looking, leave behind them the drudging burdens of this life, and stand in their own apprehension as sons of God and heirs of immortality.

We pray for thy blessing to rest upon every one in thy presence—upon those who are burdened with the cares of life; upon those who do not know what duty is; upon those who find duty difficult when it hath been interpreted to them; upon all that are endeavoring, in rough, rude places, still to maintain consistently the walk and conversation of true disciples of Christ.

Give thy Spirit to every one according to his need and infirmity. Deal with us, we beseech of thee, not according to our desert, but according to thy generosity. We pray for thy blessing to rest upon us, to-day, not only in the services of this great assembly, but in our school-rooms; and in the labors of thy servants, in the streets, in hospitals, in jails, among the sick—everywhere. Wherever thy will is done, wherever the name of Christ is spoken, and wherever the truth of Christ is made known—there may thy presence be felt, and there may thy blessing be enjoyed.

We pray that thou wilt grant more and more as we go forward in life, that we may behold the blessed termination of it, bright, and growing brighter; and that we may never be weary in well-doing, knowing that in due season we shall reap if we faint not, and that he that endureth unto the end shall be saved. Grant that we may have unfaltering patience and fidelity in the lot to which thou hast appointed us.

Bless thy cause everywhere. Give strength to those who seek the purification of morals. Remember those who go forth to make known the truths of Christ in destitute or waste places. Be with those who sacrifice pleasure and comfort that they may teach the poor and humble and unfortunate among us.

Grant, we pray thee, that our whole land may become Immanuel's. May it be evangelized. May the public conscience be intoned to a higher nobility and a better manhood.

We pray for our rulers; for our magistrates and judges; for all who are in authority. Will the Lord guide them to equity, to purity of morals, to rectitude of administration!

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the army and navy, and the officers that are in them: Grant that they may, in their perilous duties, whether by land or by sea, know thy protecting care. May those who govern men themselves obey God, the Supreme Governor, implicitly.

We pray not for our own land alone, but for all lands. Grant that thy cause may be furthered in them. And bless all those with whom we are in more immediate sympathy, that we may stand together for the right, for the spread of liberty, and for those things which conspire to make nations strong, and intelligent, and free. Overthrow superstition, and drive away ignorance; and at last advance the

whole race to the light and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou bless the word spoken. May it enlarge our charity, and yet make us love the truth. May it increase our toleration for one another, and yet deliver us from indifference. May we know what things to value; what things to emphasize; and yet may ail that we do be done in the large spirit of catholicity and forbearance. May we bear with each other. May we love one another more and more. More than every other instrument may we employ the spirit of true divine love. Let thy kingdom come. Let thy will be done upon earth as it is done in heaven. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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